PROVINCE OF SASKATCHEWAN

2008

ANNUAL REPORT

MINISTRY OF CORRECTIONS, PUBLIC SAFETY AND POLICING

Office of the Fire Commissioner

Table of Contents

Letter of Transmittal 3

Obligation to Report 5

Introduction 5

Saskatchewan Fire Losses 6

Prevention and Public Education 6

Fire Investigation 7

Training 8

Fire Service Testing and Certification 8

911 and Emergency Communications 9

Future Directions 10

Statistical Tables 11

This annual report is also available in electronic form from the Ministry's website at **www.cpsp.gov.sk.ca**

Letter of Transmittal

The Honourable D. F. Huyghebaert
Minister of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing

Dear Sir:

As required by *The Fire Prevention Act, 1992*, I am pleased to present the Saskatchewan Fire Commissioner's annual report for the year 2008. In addition to reporting the recorded provincial fire statistics, the accompanying commentary details the success of the broader related activities undertaken by the Office of the Fire Commissioner Unit of the Protection and Emergency Services Branch.

Emergency service response has become much more than fire suppression. This unit is engaged in addressing those broader issues. By focusing resources on building capacity at the local level and improving ties among all public safety interests, we realize accomplishments far greater than individual efforts and achieve our collective goals – the protection of life and property.

The Saskatchewan Fire Service, acting in conjunction with a host of other service providers, is the backbone of Saskatchewan's public safety system. Fire Departments and other related emergency service providers are responding to growing demands for their services and expertise. Volunteer and career fire fighters alike deserve special thanks for their commitment, passion and dedication to protecting Saskatchewan's people, property and environment from the perils of fire and other emergencies. Together, these public safety organizations rise to meet the challenges and demands of providing Saskatchewan residents the services they require.

Sincerely,

Duane McKay
Fire Commissioner

Obligation to Report

By statute, the Office of the Fire Commissioner (OFC) is obligated to report each year on its activities, as well as the extent of fire losses in the previous calendar year. The Fire Commissioner, in accordance with *The Fire Prevention Act, 1992* (the Act) and *The Saskatchewan Fire Code Regulations* (the Regulations), provides Saskatchewan communities, fire departments, and emergency service organizations with information, education and leadership programs and services to protect people, property and the environment from fire and other emergencies.

As prescribed by section 5 of the Act, this is accomplished through:

- the promotion and encouragement of fire prevention and the protection of life and property against fire;
- the collection and dissemination of information respecting fires in Saskatchewan;
- the keeping of records for all fires occurring in Saskatchewan, including the cause, origin, and circumstances of each fire and other information respecting each fire that the Fire Commissioner considers appropriate;
- the direct investigation of fires, or by causing fires to be investigated, and by holding inquiries into any fire when the Fire Commissioner considers it necessary to do so, in order to ascertain the cause, origin and circumstances of the fire;
- the administration and enforcement of the Act and Regulations within park lands constituted pursuant to *The Parks Act* or a regional park established pursuant to *The Regional Parks Act, 1979;*
- the provision of training courses in fire fighting and prevention; and
- the performance of any other duties that the Minister may direct.

Introduction

The Office of the Fire Commissioner (OFC) provides support to communities by aiding municipal fire services, emergency management personnel and elected officials. More specifically, it:

- coordinates training and certification for fire fighters and those in emergency management;
- coordinates programs and services for community fire safety, training, and emergency response;
- maintains the Sask911 system; and
- leads the implementation of the Provincial Public Safety Telecommunications Network (PPSTN).

The OFC is part of the Protection and Emergency Services Branch (PES), which provides for the coordination of services and programs to improve public safety and enhance emergency response and preparedness across the province. The role of PES includes ensuring government preparedness, promoting safer communities through effective emergency management programming, ongoing communications, monitoring building standards, and through the delivery of fire prevention and disaster assistance programs.

Following a branch-wide organizational review, PES was structurally re-organized to better reflect the make-up of branch programs and service delivery to stakeholders across Saskatchewan. Beginning October 2008, the OFC assumed responsibility for delivering emergency management services to communities. It also assumed responsibility for the management of Sask911. This is in addition to continuing the delivery of programs to the fire service related to investigation, technical advice, fire prevention, training and certification.

During this year of transition, the approach taken for the annual report has been modified. For 2008, the statistical data being reported focuses on key information only. This is the data that is readily available for analysis while we work towards reviewing and upgrading our statistical analysis system in order to provide for more meaningful reporting of fire loss data.

Saskatchewan Fire Losses

On average, each year in Saskatchewan approximately 4,000 fires result in approximately 19 deaths, 70 injuries and $40 million in direct property losses. The recording and analysis of data related to the number of fires and dollar losses are unavailable for 2008. When reported, the dollar losses as a result of these fires are the direct costs only and do not include indirect losses. Indirect losses are estimated to be more than nine times this base amount, totaling on average about half a billion dollars.

In 2008, Saskatchewan recorded 22 deaths and 52 injuries from fire. These numbers are consistent with 10-year averages, although the number of deaths is somewhat higher. However, the overall downward trend in deaths and injuries over the last 30 years is encouraging. Comparatively speaking, Saskatchewan's per capita fire death rate is above the national provincial average.

Cooking is still the leading cause of fires in the home. Electrical, smoking materials and heating are other leading fire causes. The largest numbers of fire-related fatalities (70 per cent) continue to occur in residential occupancies. As is generally the case, the causes of these fires are predictable and, as such, can be prevented.

The OFC maintains and provides ongoing statistical analysis of all reported fire losses in the province. The information gathered from fire reports assists in the development of a variety of fire safety programs and products, such as child-resistant lighters and flame-resistant carpeting. This information also supports improvements to fire and building codes, training programs for fire fighters and targeted education programs for the public. Each of these areas ultimately contributes to the reduction of the human and economic losses associated with fire.

Fire loss information is distributed and used nationally, provincially and locally to help identify ways to limit fire losses. This information also serves to support inquiries from provincial and federal government departments, fire departments, news media, insurance personnel, police and other interested parties.

Prevention and Public Education

The goal of every community in Saskatchewan is to minimize the loss of life and property from fire and other emergencies and natural disasters. A proactive approach to prevention has proven successful from both the public safety and economic points of view.

Public Education:

The OFC undertakes a lead role in the development and coordination of provincial public education campaigns for public safety. Analysis of data and information gathered is used to influence local and national fire and life safety campaigns. Staff of the OFC support communities with programs and resource materials that enable them to deliver public education and prevention programs at the local level.

A western Canadian partnership to educate the public about fire prevention was a successful initiative. In Saskatchewan, this education program reached almost 26,000 Kindergarten to Grade 3 students in 168 communities during Fire Prevention Week, October 5th-11th. Children's activity booklets and lesson plans were provided to fire departments. Provincial support is an important factor to engage fire department participation at the community level.

Another successful campaign focused on Emergency Preparedness Week, which was celebrated May 4th-10th in communities across the province. The theme *"72 hours - Is your family prepared?"* encouraged people to be ready to cope on their own for at least the first 72 hours of an emergency. Staff provided educational and promotional items to communities hosting local events. For both of these major education campaigns, good use was made of the website where a variety of resource materials were made available for download.

Prevention:

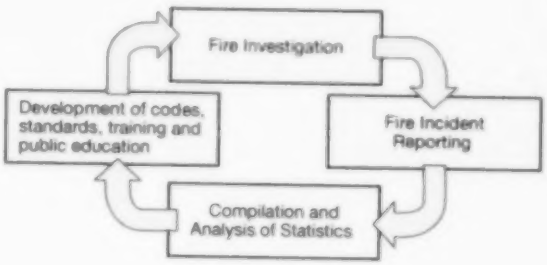
Along with public education and awareness campaigns, regular code enforcement is essential in maintaining public safety. Staff work closely with the local authorities, Fire Chiefs and other municipal officials in carrying out the obligations of *The Fire Prevention Act, 1992* and in applying provisions of the *National Fire Code* to effectively eliminate hazards and risks. Technical bulletins have been developed for local authorities who require assistance in interpretation and application of the Codes, Standards and Regulations. These documents provide guidance and technical interpretation of regulatory requirements for application of both the *National Fire Code* (NFC) and the *National Building Code* (NBC).

The OFC promotes and encourages prevention and the protection of life and property against fire and other emergencies by providing support to local authorities to meet their prevention, preparedness and protection goals. The primary focus of prevention services is to assist fire officials, emergency management personnel and municipal officials in delivering effective fire and emergency management programs in the community. Staff provide advice and assistance to municipalities to help them develop effective preparedness and response capacity at the community level.

In addition, OFC staff participate on various national and international committees and councils. This provides the opportunity to have input into changes to fire codes and standards. It also allows the OFC to provide input into the development of national strategies of interest to the province such as emergency management and fire training, education and public awareness.

Fire Investigation

Fire investigation and the accurate identification of cause, origin and circumstances of a fire are fundamental to protecting lives and property, and are necessary for preventing future occurrences of similar incidents. They are also essential for the compilation of meaningful fire statistics. The analysis of this information forms the basis for continuous improvement in codes and standards, training, and public education programs as depicted by the following model.


Fire Investigation
Development of codes, standards, training and public education
Fire Incident Reporting
Compilation and Analysis of Statistics

Each year, significant OFC program resources are dedicated to the investigation of "fires of interest" in order to determine the origin, cause and circumstances of the fire. Fires of interest include those involving deaths, injuries, the report of suspicious circumstances, and where fires involved provincially owned, leased or occupied property. Staff investigated 88 fires of interest in 2008-09. This included the investigation of several multi-fatality residential fires, as well as a number of high profile, large dollar loss fires. Much time is invested in determining cause and origin in order to find suitable ways to prevent future fire losses.

Under provisions of *The Fire Prevention Act, 1992*, individual municipalities are obliged to have a Fire Chief or Local Assistant to the Fire Commissioner. Furthermore, they are required to investigate and report on every fire that occurs within their jurisdiction. In support of its lead role in fire investigation, incident reporting, and analysis of fire statistics, the OFC continues to work at improving the gathering, compilation and distribution of fire incident data. The need to educate stakeholders about the importance of fire reporting has been identified as a future priority.

Training

Local officials are instrumental in carrying out community prevention and safety activities. It is important that they are properly trained, and are supported to carry out their duties. The OFC is committed to the development of capacity at the local level by providing support for local authorities. Such efforts are needed in order to enhance response capabilities and the delivery of prevention, preparedness and education programs at the community level.

The OFC co-sponsored two major training events: a Hazardous Materials (HAZMAT) symposium that was attended by more than 200 industry, government and fire service personnel; and a Fire Investigation Professional Development Seminar attended by 75 investigators, primarily fire, police and insurance personnel from across the Prairie provinces.

Progressive fire investigation workshops were instructed by OFC staff regionally across the province. In addition, a mentoring program designed to help investigators gain necessary field experience continues. Confidence among investigators results in improved determination of fire cause and thus, improved statistical data. Demand for this training continues to grow. As a result, we have seen improvements in the quality of fire reports being received.

Staff also coordinated and delivered 28 emergency management and fire related courses to almost 300 individuals across the province. In addition, the OFC administers a federal program aimed at increasing search and rescue capacity through training initiatives. Staff participated in a province-wide, multi-jurisdictional exercise that brought together emergency response agencies from across the province to strengthen coordinated and effective search and rescue responses.

Fire Service Testing and Certification

The testing and certification of fire service members, through both provincially and internationally recognized evaluation systems, is the responsibility of the OFC. The OFC provides an Evaluation and Certification Guide that describes the Saskatchewan fire service certification system for career, paid-on-call and volunteer fire department members. The OFC is accredited by the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) to test and certify fire service personnel to internationally recognized standards. The IFSAC site team conducted an extensive audit and the OFC was successfully re-accredited in Hazardous Materials Awareness and Operations, Fire Fighter, Pumper Driver Operator, Fire Inspector, Fire Investigator, and Fire Service Instructor standards. In addition, the OFC received accreditation for the Fire Service Officer standard.

Demand for certification continues to grow in several sectors, including training agencies and industry. More and more members of the fire service see the merits of certification, both as formal recognition and as a way to meet the demands for professional qualification. During the year, 282 certificates were issued to fire fighters across the province.

911 and Emergency Communications

Sask911

Sask911 is a co-operative program, between the province and municipalities, which maintains a province-wide enhanced 911 call-taking system. This system is available to 99 per cent of the population in the province. Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) located in Regina, Saskatoon, Lloydminster and Prince Albert are contracted to provide 911 telephone answering services. All four PSAPs are under three-year agreements ending in 2010. In January, the PSAP boundary structure was changed to provide for more efficient 911 call-answering and transferring and to develop a Provincial PSAP that answers all 911 calls outside of the cities of Regina, Saskatoon, and Lloydminster. *The Public Safety Answering Point Regulations* will be amended to reflect the boundary changes.

Testing, policy and training for the implementation of an enhanced wireless 911 system was completed. With this initial implementation, when a call is disconnected, or the caller cannot speak, the 911 system captures the call and operators can now call back to the wireless number that placed the call. Phase 2 wireless implementation, which will provide the location of the caller's wireless device, will be implemented in Saskatchewan in the next couple years. In February the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) directed wireless service providers to complete implementation of Stage 1, Phase 2 enhanced wireless service by February 2010, wherever enhanced wireless service is available. The OFC is represented on the CRTC Emergency Services Working Group, which continues to meet regarding the implementation of Phase 2 wireless in Canada. PES will work closely with PSAPs and dispatch agencies to ensure policy, training and equipment are in place.

The Sask911 Advisory Committee approved the next steps for the Sask911 program. This includes managing the impact of the boundary changes and duties on PSAPs and making necessary adjustments, developing a consulting agreement to research a 911 Next Generation call answering solution for Saskatchewan, and researching an automated addressing/mapping solution for the province.

To strengthen the provincial coordinating and decision-making efforts during an emergency, the OFC continues work with SaskEMO on a geospatial technology system. The project enhances the existing 911 mapping system by providing more accurate information to dispatch agencies and emergency responders on the changing conditions of an emergency. GeoConnections is a federal government initiative that promotes the development of shared GIS mapping applications. This project is being developed in co-operation with other government ministries and municipalities and will allow multiple ministries to share information during major emergencies.

Provincial Public Safety Telecommunications Network (PPSTN)

The Ministry was directed by the Province to lead the construction of the Provincial Public Safety Telecommunications Network. This network will link public safety providers, allow several responders to transmit immediately and ensure operation in extreme cases. Government approved the $34.6 million in incremental funding over three years to finance the purchase of equipment and fund project management for the new radio system. This system will accommodate the public safety and public service user who will be displaced upon the discontinuation of the SaskTel FleetNet system in December 2010.

Work on the new radio system has been a collaborative effort among the Ministry, the RCMP and SaskPower. The RCMP and SaskPower are completing the implementation of the radio system in the southern half of the province. To minimize any negative impact, delays or disruptions, the Ministry is completing the roll-out of the expanded system in the north and beginning the capacity expansion in the south. The RCMP and SaskPower will represent the interests of their employees and members in the establishment of the new system. Within the Ministry, the OFC will represent the broader public safety interests of the community and government agencies.

The OFC has established a User Committee to develop and distribute information and project updates/materials and continue to provide presentations to regional, local and special user group meetings regarding the development and implementation of the radio system. Local, regional, and other user groups will be assembled based on factors such as coverage, talk groups, interoperability and other operational needs.

Future Directions

Public Safety Review Committee

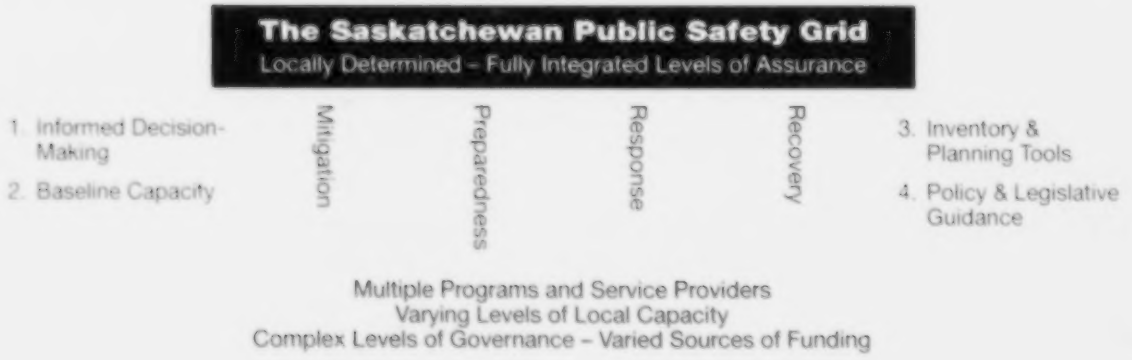
Over the past few years, the Province has witnessed a rise in the number and severity of events, including floods, fires, train derailments, and toxic spills that threatened human life and the environment. Municipal leaders have expressed growing concern at the prospect of similar events and questioned the ability of their own communities to adequately respond. In response to this, PES formed the Public Safety Review Committee (PSRC), to review the provincial public safety environment in relation to its mandate.

At this time, the PSRC has active participation from PES, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, SK Association of Rural Municipalities, SK Association of Urban Municipalities, Prince Albert Grand Council, SK Emergency Planners Association, SK Association of Fire Chiefs, SK Volunteer Fire Fighters Association, SK Building Officials Association, Search and Rescue SK Association of Volunteers, and Public Safety Canada.

The PSRC role is to identify common public safety issues within the stakeholder community and make appropriate recommendations to address those issues. It became evident that the province, its communities, and its emergency service providers require a Public Safety System that is driven at the local level yet fully integrated province-wide. The committee spoke of needing a reliable safety net, one that could provide the public with predictable levels of public safety while still permitting local authorities to make their own decisions and expenditures. Four basic elements of public safety emerged out of the discussions. These were further developed and translated into twelve framing principles.

Coming out of these discussions, the PSRC recommends implementation of a single, integrated, sustainable public safety framework that will enhance human resource capabilities, develop administrative and governance frameworks, expand infrastructure capacity and create measurable dimensions of public safety adequacy. Although the PSRC defined a system that reflects PES mandate as the focus for its work, members recognized the potential for the same grid elements to apply to other aspects of public safety.

In order to accomplish a more comprehensive review, work that had previously begun on the introduction of minor changes to *The Fire Prevention Act, 1992* was temporarily suspended pending initial outcomes from the PSRC. Work now continues on a draft bill that will lead to more effective public safety services, and ultimately, safer communities. It is anticipated that legislative amendments will go forward in fall 2009.


The Saskatchewan Public Safety Grid
Locally Determined – Fully Integrated Levels of Assurance
1. Informed Decision-Making
2. Baseline Capacity
Mitigation
Preparedness
Response
Recovery
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4. Policy & Legislative Guidance
Multiple Programs and Service Providers
Varying Levels of Local Capacity
Complex Levels of Governance – Varied Sources of Funding

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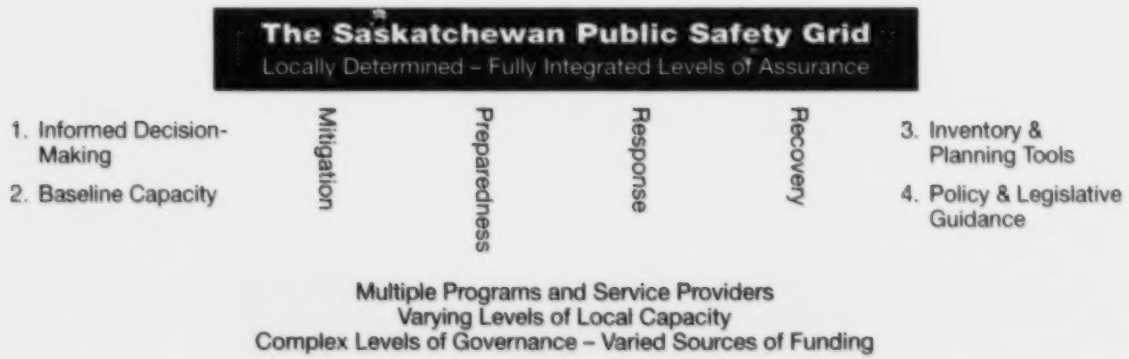
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Statistical Tables

Table 1: Fire Fatalities by Sex and Age 11
Table 2: Fire Injuries by Sex and Age 11
Table 3: Fire Fatalities by Act or Omission 11
Table 4: Fire Fatalities by Property Classification 12
Figure E: Trends in Fatalities and Injuries 12
Table 5: Fire Fatalities by Ignition Scenario 13
Table 6: Action/Condition of Fire Fatality 14
Table 7: Fire Injuries by Property Classification 14
Table 8: Fire Injuries by Act or Omission 15
Table 9: Large Loss Fires over $500,000 16

Table 1: Fire Fatalities by Sex and Age

	Age in Years										Total
	0-5	6-10	11-16	17-20	21-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	Over 65	
Female		3			1	2	1			4	11
Male						1	2	2	1	5	11
All		**3**			**1**	**3**	**3**	**2**	**1**	**9**	**22**

Table 2: Fire Injuries by Sex and Age

	Age in Years										Total
	0-5	6-10	11-16	17-20	21-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	Over 65	
Female	1	1			1	3	3	1	2		12
Male	2	1	2	1	1	3	8	9	5	8	40
All	**3**	**2**	**2**	**1**	**2**	**6**	**11**	**10**	**7**	**8**	**52**

Table 3: Fire Fatalities by Act or Omission

Accident (for example candle left burning)	7
Act or omission – cannot be determined	1
Fuel spilled accidentally	1
Human failing - unclassified	1
Inadequate control of open fire	1
Mechanical/electrical failure, malfunction – undetermined	2
Miscellaneous – undetermined (lightning, truck too high for bridge)	5
Misuse of source of ignition – cooking on stove	1
Part failure, leak, break	3
Total	**22**

Table 4: Fire Fatalities by Property Classification

Property Class	
Apartment Tenement Flat – 3 to 20 unit – No business	1
Brush and grass on open land, field. Excludes forests	1
Dwelling farm (1-family)	2
Dwelling year-round use (1-family)	10
Dwelling year-round use (2-family)	1
General truck. Non-flammable cargo, tow, grain, jeep, mail, van	2
Individual residential parking in one-storey garages	1
Outbuildings – unclassified (doghouse, gazebo)	1
Buildings under demolition.	3
Total	**22**

Figure E: Trends in Fatalities and Injuries

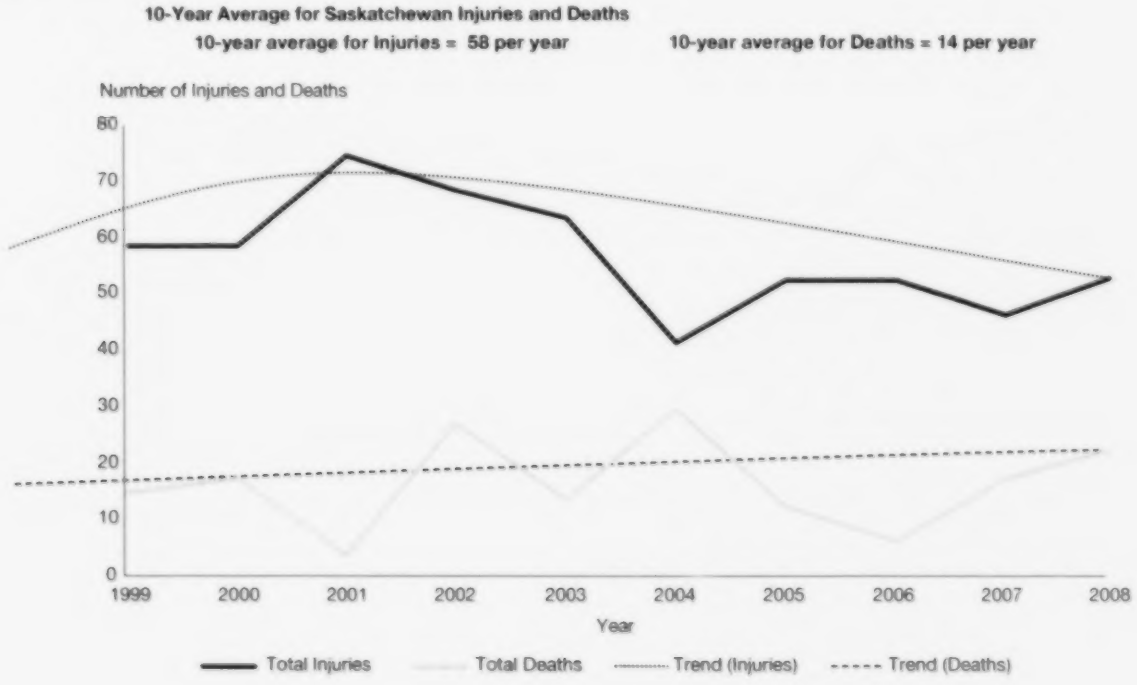

Table 5: Fire Fatalities by Ignition Scenario

Source	Material	Act	Property Class	# Deaths
Igniting object – cannot be determined	Material first ignited – cannot be determined	Act or omission – cannot be determined	Apartment tenement flat – 3 to 20 unit – No business	1
Match/lighter – cannot be determined	Grass, brush, leaves	Inadequate control of open fire	Brush and grass on open land, field. Excludes forests	1
Igniting object – undetermined	Material first ignited – unclassified	Miscellaneous – undetermined	Dwelling farm (1-family)	2
Igniting object – undetermined	Material first ignited – unclassified	Miscellaneous – undetermined	Dwelling year-round use (1-family)	2
Stove/range/top burner area involving fire in fryer/pot	Cooking oil, fat. Includes butter, lard, margarine	Misuse of source of ignition – cooking on stove	Dwelling year-round use (1-family)	1
Smoker's material – cannot be determined	Furniture (upholstered) includes chesterfield, sofa, davenport, couch	Accident (for example candle left burning)	Dwelling year-round use (1-family)	5
Smoker's material – lighter	Clothing, textiles - cannot be determined	Human failing – unclassified	Dwelling year-round use (1-family)	1
Dryer for clothes	Material first ignited – unclassified	Mechanical/electrical failure, malfunction – undetermined	Dwelling year-round use (1-family)	1
Smoker's material – cigarette	Material first ignited – unclassified	Accident (for example candle left burning)	Dwelling year-round use (2-family)	1
Internal combustion engine includes exhaust system (boat motor)	Material first ignited – unclassified	Mechanical/electrical failure, malfunction – undetermined	General truck. Non-flammable cargo, tow, grain, jeep, mail, van	1
Igniting object – undetermined	Material first ignited – unclassified	Accident (for example candle left burning)	General truck. Non-flammable cargo tow grain jeep mail van	1
Central heating unit (furnace/boiler/stoker)	Gasoline	Fuel spilled accidentally	Individual residential parking in one-storey garages	1
Igniting object – undetermined	Material first ignited – unclassified	Miscellaneous – undetermined	Outbuildings – unclassified (doghouse, gazebo)	1
Central air conditioning and refrigeration equipment	Natural gas	Part failure, leak, break	Buildings under demolition	3
Total				**22**

Table 6: Action/Condition of Fire Fatality

Condition	Number	Percent
Asleep at time of fire	8	36
Awake and no physical/mental impairment at time of fire	5	23
Bedridden or other physical handicap	1	4
Condition of Casualty – unclassified	3	14
Condition of Casualty – unknown	3	14
Impairment by alcohol, drugs or medication	2	9
Total	**22**	**100.0**

Table 7: Fire Injuries by Property Classification

	Minor Injury	Light Injury	Serious Injury	Total
Apartment Tenement Flat – 3 to 20 unit – No business	2	3	2	7
Basic industrial chemicals	1			1
Camping trailer (Tent trailer)		4		4
Canning preserving of fish, seafoods	1			1
Dwelling farm (2-family)	1			1
Dwelling year-round use (1-family)	8	14	5	27
Dwelling year-round use (2-family)	2			2
Individual residential parking in one-storey garages	1			1
Mobile home		1		1
Outbuildings – unclassified (doghouse, gazebo)		1		1
Paper, pulp, paperboard products manufacture	1			1
Slaughtering, prep, preserving of meat/poultry (meat smokers)		2	2	4
Trash and rubbish. Excludes industrial facilities		1		1
Total	**17**	**26**	**9**	**52**

Table 8: Fire Injuries by Act or Omission

	Minor Injury	Light Injury	Serious Injury	Total
Accident	3	8		11
Act or omission – cannot be determined		1		1
Child playing with open flame	1	1		2
Human Failing – cannot be determined	1	2	1	4
Human Failing – unclassified	1			1
Inadequate control of open fire		1		1
Incendiary	1			1
Mechanical/electrical failure, malfunction – undetermined	1			1
Miscellaneous – undetermined – lightning, truck too high for bridge	6	5	3	14
Misuse of source of ignition – cannot be determined			1	1
Misuse of source of ignition – cooking on stove	1			1
Other installation deficiency			1	1
Part failure, leak, break		2	2	4
Smoker's material	2	5	1	8
Suspected impairment by use of alcohol/drugs/ medication		1		1
Total	**17**	**26**	**9**	**52**

Table 9: Large Loss Fires over $500,000

Property Class	Act or Omission	Estimated Dollar Loss
Canning preserving of fish, seafoods	Miscellaneous – undetermined	$3,000,000
Motor vehicle sales and services including farm implements	Mechanical/electrical failure, malfunction – undetermined	$2,419,000
Hotel, inn, lodge – year round use	Mechanical/electrical failure, malfunction – undetermined	$1,500,000
Crops, orchards, straw stacks and hay stacks or bales	Miscellaneous – undetermined	$855,000
Warehouse	Exposure from other fire	$855,000
Dwelling year-round use (1-family)	Part failure, leak, break	$788,900
Shed includes implement shed	Mechanical, electrical failure, malfunction – unclassified	$675,000
Individual residential parking in one-storey garages	Mechanical/electrical failure, malfunction – undetermined	$650,000
Dwelling year-round use (1-family)	Miscellaneous – undetermined	$600,000
Dwelling year-round use (1-family)	Mechanical/electrical failure, malfunction – undetermined	$600,000
Motor vehicle repair garage/paint shop. No car washing	Miscellaneous – undetermined	$600,000
Slaughtering, prep, preserving of meat/poultry (meat smokers)	Accident	$556,000
Dwelling year-round use (1-family)	Miscellaneous – undetermined	$500,000
Dwelling year-round use (1-family)	Accident	$500,000
General auto parking garage, excludes repair shops	Incendiary	$500,000